
Title: For the Sake of Honor

Author: Jorland Brae

Jorland looked around
the library on
Paladin's Isle. No one.
Not a soul.. and there
looked to be no one that
had visited here in
weeks, perhaps
months. All pieces of
furniture, as well as
books. were layered
with dust. Small
cobwebs were
scattered in the
corners of the large
study. The Only signs
of life were coming
from his own body.

"What is happening?"
the paladin said aloud
to himself.

"Thou art still alive,"
replied a voice as the
door on the far end of
the study creaked
open. "I thought as
much."

The voice that sounded
of dry leaves.. but it
carried with it a great
weight, as well as a
tone of deep pain and
sorrow.

None-the-less,
Jorland reached for
his hammer,
suddenly realizing it
was not there.

"Do not worry, Paladin
Jorland," replied the
voice, the source being
an aged figure
wearing a tan hooded
robe that looked to have
seen better days.

The figure's hands
were partially
bandaged, and also
matched the quality of
the robe. "We are in a
place of sanctuary. I
will not harm thee,
and thine honour will
not let thee too harm
me."

"Paladin Jorland,"
repeated the
well-matured Brae as
he backed down from
his defensive pose.
"Quite a change from
'farmboy'.. State your
business, Norus."

The decrepit figure let
out what sounded like
a sigh. "I am through
fighting. I have
regained enough
sanity to realize what
I had been doing these
past three hundred
years."

Jorland had an uneasy
look to his face. "You
have, have you?" he
interrogated. "I am
surprised you have
come back to the place
that you had
forsaken."

"On the contrary,
Paladin.." Norus
retorted, "I have not
forsaken my oath to
Montor or to honour. I
cherish them still, as
if they were my own
parents. I have never
left those ideals."
"Then," Jorland
pondered out loud,
"how could you have
done what have for so
long? How-"

"Be easy, Paladin."
intervened the
withered and cloaked
body. "Know that what

thou hast heard about
is not necessarily true.
Please.. sit."

Jorland reluctantly
followed Norus'
gesture and sat down
upon a dusty chair in
the study.

"The histories told of
four leaders: Norus,
Sudin, Vestar, and
Iestos.. and that they
were corrupt and
shifted loyalties to
Mondain, so the Order
banished them."

Jorland nodded, then
the aged figure
continued. "The truth
lies deeper than what
the books tell you. We
did not 'Shift
loyalties'. "Mondain
was a vengeful
wizard, especially
when it came to
protecting Minax. We
had her imprisoned in
Montor for crimes
against the Order
shortly before the
first Age of Darkness
began. Angered by
this, Mondain sent
Daemon assassins to
exterminate the
leaders- myself and
my three older
'brothers'. Though the
attempt failed, Minax
managed to free
herself from the
prison. With her
potent magic she
captured us.. and sent
us to Mondain's keep.
Infuriated, Mondain
wanted to end our lives
right there and then..
which was in fact our
wish. Minax though,
wanted us to live.. in
servitude of the man
we had sworn to
defeat."

"So you were enslaved
by their magics.." stated Jorland.

"Thou art correct," the other answered. "We were bound to their bidding.. cursed. The only way to break the curse was to either end our lives, or to end the family lines of our apprentices. The apprentices were of course, the four known as Skara, Judah, James, and Ariyah. We were defeated by our apprentices, but Mondain would not let us die. He put us in a state of suspended animation until such time that the family lines would be reduced to one. Then we would be released unto the world again with our blackened hearts."

"..which has apparently happened?"

Norus grunted an acknowledgement.
"Yes, but our minds were so warped and twisted from the magic that we did not realize that killing our apprentices' family would also destroy us. That is, until Sudin found out first hand.."

Jorland went pale.
"Sudin? ..you mean, Arturius-"

"My apologies for his death," interjected Norus. "Though no amount of apologizing will bring him back. Sudin did not realize

what he had done until
the deed was already
complete. When he
killed the
Lightbringer, it freed
him from the curse.
However, his mind
was still unrational..
and when as the
knowledge of the past
came back to him, it
drove him over the
edge, into complete
madness. He returned
to us.. and destroyed
Iestos and Vestar.."

"..but he did not kill
you.. Why?"

Norus shook his head.
"He fell dead to the
floor before he could
reach me. His time
was limited in this
world after breaking
the curse."

"..but what of you?
Shouldn't you have
died as well?"

The venerable body
laughed. Not
frightening and
manical as he was
before, but more
gentle, like that of an
old man. I should
have.. But somehow,
thou hast lived. Even
though I have watched
thee die from within
my tortured mind..
which has allowed me
to continue on in this
old body. I cannot die
unless I kill thee.. or
if thou shalt kill me..
and to kill me, thou
must have the
gauntlets.. the
'Sunweilders'." From
within the tattered
robe, Norus pulled
forth a pair of gold
gauntlets and
presented them to

Jorland, "Put these
on.. and finish it."
Norus then pulled
forth a rusted sword
as Jorland donned the
gauntlets. As the
Paladin took up the
offered sword, the
former Northern
Darkness bent to one
knee.

"Norus.. can there be
no other way?"

The hooded figure
shook his head. "I do
not wish to go on in
this shell of a body.
My life ended three
hundred years ago..
Set me free.."

As Jorland raised the
sword, he paused,
"Norus.. When am I?"

Without looking up as
if he knew what had
happened, "Three
years have passed
since thine
near-death in the
north. Now for the
sake of Honour.. set
me free."

Sorrow filled
Jorland's heart as he
ended Norus' curse.